

INSECTS AND SLANG

Slang is usually humorous and satirical and its use is world-wide. It frequently expresses in a few words something that would ordinarily take many more. Often, but not always, it is characterized as coarse or vulgar. All sorts of callings, professional and otherwise have their own peculiar slang, and it abounds in schools, factories, offices, etc. There is military slang, stage slang, legal slang, etc., etc., etc.

One would not expect any but the most common insects, usually those associated with man, to be used in slang expressions. And this is borne out by the following examples which have been hastily gathered from "The Slang Dictionary", London, 1894 and "Slang and Its Analogues" by John S. Farmer, London, 1890, 6 vols.

Beeswax, poor soft cheese.
 Beeswaxers, thick boots used for playing football.
 Beeswing, a film in port wines, the result of age.
 Beetle-crusher, a large foot.
 Beetle-sticker, an entomologist.
 Bug, (thieves') a breast pin.
 Bug blinding, (military) whitewashing operations.
 Bug hunter, a thief who robs drunken men.
 Bug juice, ginger ale, bad whiskey, etc.
 Bug walk, a bed.
 Butterfly, (nautical) a river barge.
 Flea bite, a trifle.
 Flea, a miser, skin flint.
 Flea-bag, a bed.
 Flies, nonsense, trickery, deceit, lies.
 Louse ladder, a ladder in a stocking.
 Louse trap, a small-tooth comb.
 Louse walk, a back hair parting.
 Maggoty, fanciful, fidgety.

A further search might result in the finding of additional slang terms involving insects and perhaps uncover "entomological slang", although at the moment, I am unable to think of a single word or expression that belongs to the latter category.—H. B. W.